MELCHIOR OF BOSTON

EARLS

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He was gazing, as if in a dream, far off where the sky and water met.—*Page 11.*

MELCHIOR OF BOSTON

BY

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To
Helen
and
Gerard

CONTENTS

PAGE

CHAPTER I

Mr. Edward Gray 9

CHAPTER II

St. Moville's 27

CHAPTER III

The Play 40

CHAPTER IV

Balthasar 53

CHAPTER V

The Part of Miriam 77

CHAPTER VI

A First Rehearsal 95

CONTENTS

PAGE

CHAPTER VII

THE SCORN OF TIRECH . . . 108

CHAPTER VIII

THE DRESS REHEARSAL . . . 119

CHAPTER IX

A MORNING BY THE EUPHRATES . 131

CHAPTER X

EVE OF EPIPHANY 151

CHAPTER XI

MELCHIOR 159

CHAPTER XII

A MATINEE 168

MELCHIOR OF BOSTON

CHAPTER I

MR. EDWARD GRAY

IT WAS five o'clock one August afternoon as Mr. Edward Gray walked up the road toward his summer home in Hull. A busy day at his office in Boston had made him unusually anxious to get back to the porch that looked eastward out to the sea, and to enjoy the cool breezes and the coming and going of ships by the Boston Light. When he reached the porch he found a note on his favorite chair; it contained an announcement, in Mrs. Gray's handwriting, that she had gone to Boston

with Kevin to arrange about his entrance at St. Moville's Preparatory School the coming term. He was not surprised at the news, for at breakfast that very morning the question about Kevin's school had been settled, and Mrs. Gray, if the weather permitted, was to take him to St. Moville's that afternoon.

Mr. Gray pulled his chair into view of the sea and sat down. About fifty yards from the porch, on the other side of the boulevard, ran a little stretch of sandy beach; and as he gazed toward it for a few moments he saw the waving of little hands, and he heard the happy shout of his three other children, who, in the care of Kate, the servant, were enjoying their evening play on the sands. Mr. Gray waved back to them. But his eyes suddenly looked out toward the ocean, and in a few

moments he was gazing, as if in a dream, far off where the sky and water met. Ships of every description moved over the waters—white sails that seemed poised as in a picture, and large steamers that trailed long pennants of smoke; but none of these did he take into his attention. Even the occasional automobile that passed as a whirlwind in miniature did not distract the mood into which his mind had settled.

His thoughts were on the subject of Kevin and his new school. It was a Catholic school, and naturally it was the choice of his wife, being of her own religion. Mr. Gray was not a Catholic. Once he had been, in turn, a member of two or three of the Protestant sects; now his Sundays were spent entirely at home, which was a sign that he belonged to no church. Yet, in accordance with his honor in all things, he had been

faithful to the promises he made when he married Margaret Clare; he had never placed any hindrance in the way of her religious training of the children. On the contrary, there was more than one occasion when, during the illness of the mother, he made the children kneel by his side and recite their evening prayers, while he followed from a prayer-book: and at similar times he had taken little Margaret and Kevin to their Sunday-school, leaving them at the door, and returning for them at the hour of dismissal. Only twice had he, during his married life, used quarrelsome words with his wife on the question of religion: once at her unswerving insistence on going to church on Sunday shortly after Kevin was born and could be left to the care of a nurse; and again when she persisted in calling Kevin by his Christian

name—a saint's name, she said—though he wanted the child to be named "Sherwood," after one of his ancestors among the early settlers of Massachusetts.

But the memory of these little disputes had long since passed away; not even the faintest shadow of them fell on Mr. Gray's present mood. His attention was now thoroughly absorbed in the new turn of Kevin's education. It was not a matter of surprise that he stood face to face with the situation, intently looking at it. For Kevin's health during the past year, especially the first six months, had not been good; and his education, along the lines of the first year in a preparatory school, had been attended to at home. A tutor had been engaged, with the result that Kevin was now able to enter the second-year class.

And now the boy was to go to St. Moville's. That was the thing that fastened on Mr. Gray's mind and threw him into his present current of thought. He did not know much about the school; he had seen a prospectus of the place and he had read carefully what it contained about studies and discipline. It was conducted by a Religious Order; there were three Fathers and four Scholastics and some laymen as teachers, Mrs. Gray afterward told him. But this information was not illuminating to Mr. Gray. The sum of his knowledge was that "this St. Moville's is a school under Catholic clergymen. What should he think of that?"

There was an indefinite feeling of loneliness in the thoughts that now filled his mind. It had occurred to him, in some brief moments of consid-

eration during the past years, that he was, in a certain way, a stranger in his own household. His life had been one long devotion to his wife and children, and they, in turn, had lavished affection and love on him in a degree far surpassing that which was found in the homes of his business associates. Yet he had to feel at times that there was some bond that was not as tightly drawn as it should be in the family circle—some small separating chasm, he on one side and his wife and children on the other. In the material and social life of the household there was intimacy and love of the sincerest kind, a spirit that was marked for constant praise among all who knew of it. But there is a soul as well as a body in family life, an underlying spirit as well as the external form, and it was here where the difference existed. Mr.

Gray was fully conscious that, however praiseworthy he was for his fatherly devotedness and his business integrity, he was not a complete ideal to his children. He had thoughts and counsels that could teach them much for their service of life; he was by his own example as a citizen and a man of affairs treading a pathway in which they might safely and honorably walk in later years. And yet that was not all—that was not all—he came to realize more keenly as the children advanced in age. There was another department in life, there was something else in the children that needed a teacher, and he was not the one to be that. Moral lessons he could give them, as he had often done, from his readings of the best discourses of Phillips Brooks and Channing. But these, even he himself saw, were mere gen-

eralities, splendid reaches out into the realms of the indefinite. Dogma in religious truth, though that was not his phrase, and a definite moral code, clear in all its details—these he had not to give with authority. In these things the teacher of his children was their Catholic mother, and for this, as he felt, Mrs. Gray was more of an ideal to the household than he could be. For this she would have a love that he, gentlemanly, fatherly, industrious as he was, could not hope to obtain of his own children.

"The people of a nation," he whispered to himself, recalling a portion of a speech which he had heard at the last meeting of the City Club, "the people of a nation are devoted to it in so far as it is able to, and does, foster the full life of their bodies and souls. A nation may be prosperous and afford to

every inhabitant on its soil a key to its treasures of wealth. Yet it will not satisfy the entire cravings of their heart; it will not win their deepest spirit of sympathy or even of patriotism. To do that it must endeavor to supply riches for their soul-life, for the ideal longings of their mind and heart. Take the Irish and the Poles. They come from lands that are not rated high in temporal prosperousness; but their national life is a herald of better things than laws of trade and finance; it is a nurse of the highest ideals—of their souls; it feeds the deepest cravings of their hearts; and wherever the Irish have gone, and whether they have risen to the chair of state, or fallen down in the crush of the struggle, they have made the lands of their adoption in all parts of the world listen to their songs in praise of their own native country.

And France—how different! She can bless her children out of her bounteous store of national resources. But she has tried to deny them liberty of conscience, to rob them, her own sons and daughters, of a treasure that was dearer to them than life itself. She has driven them forth over the earth, or left them in the slavery of her injustice at home. And it is true, as it was said of old, a house divided against itself shall fall."

Mr. Gray at this last sentence broke away from the repetition of the speech. A little thrill ran through him; he lifted himself up in his chair, and glanced down at his children on the beach. They were waving and hallooing to an evening steamer going to Maine. He looked out again over the sea, and again the former mood was on him. Such a frame of mind was altogether unusual

to him. He was a typical American man of business; the calls of trade and his love of reading in his little library at home had ever kept him from self-introspection or from any analysis of his own character; but this solitary hour on which he fell now, through the absence of Mrs. Gray and Kevin—and the reason of their absence especially—gave him an impulse that he had never felt before.

"A house divided against itself—" the sentence came back to him, but he shook it from his mind, even unconsciously waving his hand to give emphasis to his effort. He was not an atheist, he said to himself: people, he reasoned, would even call him a Christian gentleman. True he did not go regularly to any church. When he was married he went to a Baptist or Methodist meeting, more because of his

wife's fidelity to her own church, for he wanted to let her see that he, too, had religion. Then after a few years he tired of the unauthoritative discourses which he listened to Sunday after Sunday; he lost respect for the preachers who, to be assured of a congregation, had to advertise their programmes of excellent music and curious titles of sermons, which were little more than ordinary lectures in literature; and after he had looked in at various services, which came and went as the fashions in women's clothes, he gradually lost all desire to go to church, and his Sunday morning, out of the house, was spent in a pleasant stroll along Commonwealth Avenue and through the Public Gardens. Finally, he dared to stay at home, not, however, without the feeling that this new phase of his conduct, though it was logically conse-

quent upon his dissatisfaction in his religious views, or in his lack of them, would be a surprise to his wife, Catholic as she was.

"Come, Ed," she said, as she passed through the study and saw her husband with the Sunday paper, "aren't you going to church to-day—such a beautiful day?"

He excused himself as not feeling well; and so he came to stay at home on that Sunday and on all the Sundays afterward. He went now and then to the great auditorium in Tremont Temple, to an occasional meeting, which may have had a vague religious significance; and on Christmas and Easter he accompanied his wife to the services at her church on Concord Street; but a regular churchgoer Mr. Gray had ceased to be. Here he was now, in his attitude toward religion, a type of mil-

lions of his countrymen—a keen follower of business, a good citizen, fond of an evening in his study at home, or of a concert at Symphony Hall, and utterly regardless of the doings of churches, except in the work they did (for the most part with much ado in the newspapers), in the social and philanthropic life of the city.

The realization of all this came to Mr. Gray for the first time with any vividness, as he sat alone this August evening on the porch overlooking the sea. Stern and stoical as his character was from the years of business, he could not altogether keep out of his thoughts, now that they pressed strongly upon him, a spirit of loneliness. Were not his children—his own devoted children—separated from him, and were they not nearer, in the deepest bonds of life, to their mother than to

him? And was not Kevin now to widen the distance? Was he not going to acquire a fuller knowledge of his mother's religion and its doctrines and practices, while he, the father, was more alienated than ever from all beliefs and creeds? Social pleasures Mr. Gray had among his fellow men, and the delight of a loyal and loving home. But there was a missing note in the music of his life. He was not thoroughly heart to heart with his children and their mother—and the years were going to increase the distance. Would they lead to—would they bring on bitter estrangement?

With this last question, that seemed to cut at his heart, he stood up quickly as if he were going to ward off a blow from an enemy. He clasped both hands about a pillar of the porch and moved forward and backward, hoping

that the exercise would rid him of his mood. Then he jumped from the porch and started for his children on the beach. Play with them would banish his thoughts—these new thoughts that had never before come to worry him and his domestic happiness.

"And after all," he said, as if to console himself as he walked on, "perhaps Kevin may not go there; he may not be able to make the class."

But he could not proceed with his soliloquy. A shout came up the road and he recognized Kevin's voice. He looked and saw him leave his mother's side and in joyous speed come across the grass. In a few moments the little lad was in his father's arms for his evening kiss. Mrs. Gray went directly to the house, and was followed by Kate, who came up from the beach to make ready the dinner. Presently Mr. Gray

with his four children, Margaret and Hugh holding him fast by the hands, came strolling up the walk. Their merry voices and their childish stories of the day left him no moment during the rest of the evening for his solitary reflections.

CHAPTER II

ST. MOVILLE'S

THE pleasure of looking upon some sublime portion of the earth's scenery or of participating in some beautiful experience of life does not belong only to the person who is the first to come to it; every aftercomer, since he brings his own fresh eyes and heart, will take from the scene or the incident his portion of delight. So does the latest visitor to Rome, with rapt attentiveness and entrancement, possessed, as he may imagine, only by himself, view the dead grandeur of the Forum or the living majesty of the Vatican, though a million people from every corner of the earth have already

stood there aglow with the same emotions that now thrill within his breast.

And so did the Gray household entertain itself with the delight of having a boy begin his studies at a "prep" school. During its forty years of existence, St. Moville's had drawn to its halls the children of zealous Catholics in and about Boston. But when Kevin Gray began his high-hearted student days there, it did not occur to Mrs. Gray's mind that her feelings of joy were but the repetition of many another anxious mother's experience before her. There was this difference, however, in her case, and it was this that kept her measure of rejoicing from being full—Kevin's father was not a Catholic. He had prejudices, albeit hidden, that remained from his early training; and he possessed now, with the world in which his business dealings were transacted,

an attitude toward religion in general which was, though it did not call itself candidly by name, an unprofessed agnosticism. "The Churches," as he and his associates termed the various Protestant sects, were things belonging to respectability, but counting for nothing more; while the Catholics, they would say, though it was out of form nowadays to speak disparagingly of them, were to be pitied for their insistent folly in adhering to their old, inexplicable ideas.

Mrs. Gray, therefore, while she allowed no breath of wrongful dissimulation to enter her house, had to moderate the expression of her enthusiasm over the new phase of Kevin's education. She would not by the least word or sign diminish her children's candor and open-mindedness toward their father. But there were things in their

religious talks which he would not appreciate, nay, which might make him annoyed and even hostile. She remembered the reluctance with which her husband had given the final permission for St. Moville's; and it was her opinion that the reason why he had afterward requested Kevin not to come to his town office was due to a fear he had of being ridiculed for sending his boy to a "monkish school," as his associates might call it. And he had, unfortunately, been able to name a few notable Catholics in Boston who did not send their boys to St. Moville's.

Consequently the family appreciation of Kevin's young school-days was more restrained than it might otherwise have been. A good portion of his enthusiastic talk about the school life, the deeds of the day in and out of the halls, were not told when his father was part

of the audience. Mrs. Gray strove to preclude any utterance in the jubilant narrations about the customs at the school or the teachers in their religious uniform. A few words sufficed for the father from Kevin's daily history: how his lessons and the repetitions progressed, what was his attention to his books and to the principles of conduct he was taught. To his mother and to his little sister, Margaret, and his brothers, Hugh and Brendan, all in large-eyed wonderment, the after-school recitals were more interesting than the pages of a story-book.

"Is that like your class?" asked Hugh, pointing to a wall of the home-study where hung a picture of the United States Senate.

"Oh, wait, Kevin!" cried Brendan; "is this like your field?" He held up an illustrated book that showed a pic-

ture of a thronged stadium in Greece.

And Margaret, the senior of these two questioners, wanted information to satisfy herself. "Do tell us, Kevin, please. Is it just as beautiful as all the outdoor places we saw along the North Shore last summer?"

"You'll see for yourselves," was Kevin's general answer. "Some day Mother will bring you out, won't you, Mother?"

"Yes, some day, Kevin; we must all go out to see St. Moville's," answered Mrs. Gray, as she continued with her household duties, ever and anon stopping to take part in the young folks' conversation. She had already seen a part of the school, when she took Kevin there during the summer to arrange about his admission; and she had met the Head Master, Father Hughes, and Kevin's teacher, Mr. Russell, one of the

Scholastics. Mr. Gray, too, in his occasional trips to Newton had noticed some of the buildings standing in among tall elms and drooping willows.

St. Moville's stood beautifully on one of the hills near the outskirts of Boston. One of the most magnificent boulevards of the city ran by the school-grounds; and cars that reached the Boston Common in little over a half hour gave the boys a quick and delightful ride toward their homes. A huge Celtic cross at the boulevard entrance was in view of all who passed that way. A splendid example of the Swiss chalet, the residence of the lay teachers, graced the lower corner of the property. But perhaps the most attractive feature that St. Moville's showed to onlookers as they sped past in automobiles or strolled up the hill were the graceful terraces that decked the incline leading

down to one of the city's picturesque lakes.

Behind the buildings and the rows of trees, hidden from the street, lay the playfield, marked with all the diagrams that such a piece of earth usually wears. A little to the west of that, behind a gently-sloping hill of firs and maples, was a pretty glen, oval-shaped, about a half-mile in length, very recently made to be the bed of a serviceable lake. Formerly a tiny estuary of the river Charles held possession of the glen, maintaining its rights at flood-tide by running freely over the sedgy low-lands. But, fortunately, the glen where the rivulet left it was quite narrow; and there a strong dam was built, and the rule of the marshy field passed from the river to the lake which the boys enjoyed all heartily.

Of the playfield and the lake Kevin

had no end of stories during his first month at St. Moville's. Day after day brought its page of interesting sport and excitement. Every ceremony in the chapel, too, every contest in the class, every diversion in hall or grove, came home with the glow of romance.

"Mother," cried Kevin, as he entered the house one day in early October, "and say, Margaret, do you want to hear? Come ahead, Hugo and Bren." And when the family Round Table was assembled he started his stories of the day, which, like the greater part of his narrations, were of small or no interest outside of the circle that listened to them. "We began football this afternoon," was the important announcement this time. "After school we went to the field—no late-comers *there,* you bet! And every class is to have a team, and ours is going to be a

wonder, and Mr. Russell gave us a splendid start to-day, and maybe I'll make quarterback, anyway I'll get a chance, and——"

The abrupt ending of this speech, made with breathless haste, startled the little assembly.

"And what else, dear?" asked his mother, turning from her work.

"Oh, I know," chimed in Hugh; "I know! He wants you to buy him a football. Can I play, too, Kev?"

"You can't tackle," answered Brendan. "You'd look nice after tackling a big fellow, wouldn't you?"

But Kevin, by this, was ready for his mother's question. "Why, the worst thing of all, and on the very first day, mother. In one of the practice plays a big boy of the Fourth Class broke his leg, a boy named Neil Carlin."

"Gracious, Kevin! God bless him,"

said Mrs. Gray with sudden alarm. "Kevin," she added, coming over to him to assure herself that he was not bruised or injured in any way himself, "Kevin, I think father will not want you to play that rough game. How did that terrible accident happen?"

"Just the purest kind of hard luck, Mother," he answered. "It was no rush; just a peg was sticking out of the ground, and he tripped on it and fell, and nobody could understand how that broke his leg. And what do you think?" said he, after a breathless pause; "Mr. Russell was there in a moment and fixed the leg, straightened it right back into position, and I heard the doctor tell him when he came up a half hour afterward that it was just the thing to do, to put the bone back quickly into place, and he congratulated Mr. Russell, and said it would not

take long for the healing and that there would not be much pain, and——"

"But who'll play for him?" inquired Brendan anxiously.

"What a question, Brendan!" said Mrs. Gray with a chiding tone. "Think of that poor suffering boy, and of his own little home, and how pained the Fathers at the school must feel."

"And they brought Neil to their own infirmary, Mother," added Kevin; "and Mr. Russell said that he and the Brother Infirmarian will see that Neil has a very comfortable night."

And so went the recital of that day's history, not without bringing to the mind of Mrs. Gray a misgiving that her boy might meet with some accident. But she was wise enough to let the apprehension go from her as the days wore on, while Kevin continued to interest the Round Table with stories of

his school life: a thought now and then from the classroom, or an incident from the after-school games, all brimful of healthy interest, and each contributing, as the father himself confessed, its part to the upgrowing of Kevin's mind and body.

CHAPTER III

THE PLAY

ONE evening in the first week of November Mrs. Gray had begun to be alarmed at Kevin's lateness in returning from school. Usually, even when he remained for after-school exercises, he reached home before half-past five. Classes were dismissed at three o'clock, and a rule at the school obliged the boys, especially those under sixteen years of age, to end their play at a time which would enable them to reach their homes before six. They might come out to the field on Thursday, the weekly holiday, and satisfy their love of games to the full.

Mrs. Gray knew of the rule, and this

was partly the cause of her apprehensions. Presently she recalled the accident that had happened in the football practice, and for a few moments her heart beat with anxiety. Concealing her fears from Mr. Gray, who had just come in from his office, she walked calmly to one of the windows that looked down Crawford Street to see if Kevin might be lagging along from the car. The thought came to her that her alarm was foolish, that Mr. Russell would have telephoned if there was any trouble; and accordingly she returned to the little study, where the children were playing with their father. Yet she could not dispel entirely her sense of nervousness, for always she had to bear in mind the possibility of her husband's displeasure if anything went awry at St. Moville's.

As the bell for dinner sounded Mr.

Gray stood up and looked at his watch.

"What keeps Kevin to-day?" he asked in a tone of surprise. "Let me see; I don't remember that he ever returned so late; he was always here when I got back from town."

The observation was somewhat painful to Mrs. Gray. Sure enough, Kevin had always reached home before his father, and this had given her a chance to exercise censorship on the news from the school. It gave her the first hearing of Kevin's daily story, and so she could sift from it any little details that might not be welcome to the father's ears. How often she wished that it were possible to have him share the jubilant outpouring of the children's talk.

Kevin's late-coming on this occasion, therefore, worried Mrs. Gray. But she kept a cheery voice for such vexing

situations, and now she said as vivaciously as she could: "Wouldn't it be just the kind of evening for those boys to try a walk home from school? Kevin said that Mr. Russell had proposed to some of his strong boys to take a brisk walk home when a cool pleasant autumn day came. And this is such a day, Ed. And that boy will be hungry as a tiger when he gets home."

"All those hills on Commonwealth, Mother?" asked Margaret, in great surprise at such a feat as a walk to Crawford Street from St. Moville's; "walk all those hills and down that big street?"

"But, dear, there are short cuts home, you must know; what is easier than the level stretch of Beacon?" was the mother's response.

"It is a good distance to walk," said the father, as he moved with the others

toward the dining-room; "and if Kevin has had enough lunch and can stand the journey it will do him no harm—make him hardy—and to-morrow, by the way, is holiday for him; he'll sleep like a top."

But Kevin was not detained by the supposed promenade. That did his father and mother guess when they heard him call at the side gateway, as he ran along the walk in the yard. There was no fatigue in voice or step.

"O, say, Mother, the best yet!" was the announcement he called forth in a tone that might have reached any part of the house. He went directly to the study, but finding nobody there looked in at the dining-room. He was going to call out again, but he saw the family seated at table. He took a needed breath and entered to greet each of them in his accustomed manner.

"Did you walk all the way, every bit of the road, Kev?" asked little Hugh, holding his brother's hand.

"Come, dear," the mother said gently, "come, get ready for dinner. You are just in time. We'll hear all about the walk when you return."

"It isn't a walk, Mother," said the boy, moving away. He stopped a moment at the door, and whispered, "Say, Brendan, it's the best yet. Wait till you hear."

Kevin returned in a few minutes. A conversation between his father and mother about affairs in town was going on, and when it ended Hugh leaned forward and said in a low voice, "Tell us about it, Kev."

"Yes, Kevin," added the father. "I second Hugh's motion before the house. What is it that you call 'the best yet'?"

Mrs. Gray was not sure that Kevin

would have his story right. She feared that he might not eliminate objectionable details, some incident touching a religious service at the school, or about one of the Fathers. Quickly as her constant watchfulness had habituated her to do, she thought of a list of questions to interpose as obstacles in the path of Kevin's narrative if it ran across untrespassable ground.

"It's about a play, Father," replied Kevin very eagerly. "Mr. Russell has written a play, and he told us about it to-day after school when we came up from the field; he asked us to meet him on Clare Terrace. And we walked there while he told the story. And he has selected most of the boys already. And——"

"Are you one, Kev, and in a costume?" Margaret interrupted the narrative.

"I'm to be David, not the great David of the Bible, but a son of one of the Magi, one of the Wisemen from the East. His name is Balthasar, who comes to see Christ in Bethlehem. And I ride a long, long journey on a camel."

"A camel?" shouted Hugh, before Kevin could get breath to continue. "A real walking camel?"

"Is it far if you fall off?" was Margaret's question.

"It won't be a real camel with a high hump," said Brendan, wanting to appear the most knowing.

Mother and father were smiling at the children's dialogue. Mr. Gray took part in it, answering Margaret's question: "Yes, it will be a long fall, if Kevin drops from the camel. For the camel, I suppose, is to be miles and miles away from the stage."

"Oh, you mustn't spoil the part behind the scenes, Father!" said Kevin, with a merry wink away from the others. "My camel does not bring me to the stage. We are going to travel hundreds of miles, over deserts and hills and along by rivers, and——"

"And I think you'll be all tired out," broke in the treble voice of Hugh.

"And through many strange countries," continued Kevin. "But all this is behind the stage. And then we come in and rest under our tents, or speak before chiefs of tribes, or enter courts. And it will be at Christmas-time. That is the best part of it all. Mr. Russell calls it a moral play, I think; a play that shows a lesson or acts like a lesson, something like in the old stage-pieces, Mr. Russell said."

This was the place for one of the diverting questions of the mother; she

did not want the sermon of the play preached right there at her husband.

But Mr. Gray spoke first, "I think you mean a morality play, Kevin, or perhaps a mystery play, such as the monks used to write long ago."

Mrs. Gray felt that she had to say something to stave off the sermon, which, perhaps, was aimed at such as her husband; for a real Morality, she knew, spoke its lesson to all the world, and to some with more force than to others. She would hear the preachment first, and then she would see how Kevin might tell it without fear of offending. Perhaps Mr. Gray would attend the Morality; surely he would take the children if there should be a matinee performance; and then the lesson—how she prayed that there might be one to help the loving father of that home—might reach deep into his heart,

and, with God's grace, assist him to attain the blessedness of the Faith.

All this flashed across her mind when Mr. Gray spoke of monks and the plays which he had seen: and when he ended she said in her brightest voice, "But Hugh wants to know if we are to see you on the camel. Can't we come in behind the scenes and stand near the camel, or watch you come up across the desert? We'll wave to you, won't we, Hugh?"

With such interpositions did Mrs. Gray break in on Kevin's narrative as often as it appeared to tread on what was, unfortunately, unwelcome territory in the family circle—any exuberant talk on religious matters. And, fortunately, if Mr. Gray would have taken it amiss, the lesson of the play was not given that evening. Mrs. Gray listened to the story, told in piece-

meal on many subsequent afternoons. It was, indeed, a Morality, and it did have a powerful lesson for her husband, if he would go to see it. Kevin did not apprehend the full significance of the piece; but his mother put together its various parts, as he went over them after the first rehearsals; and she caught the lesson of "Balthasar," and she prayed that her husband might hear its appeal and take it into his life. The usual prayer which the children said for their father every night had this addition now: "And God bless the little play at Kevin's school, and give it every success."

"And bless Kevin on the long journey," chimed in the sweet, innocent voice of Hugh as they made the Sign of the Cross.

"Yes, bless Kevin's long journey, and every wise man's, too," added the

mother as she stooped to kiss her little boy good night. And she went away to her room, whispering to herself, "And give a Balthasar to our house." But as she arose from her prie-dieu she stood before her own question: "Is it, after all, a play for him more than for myself?"

CHAPTER IV

BALTHASAR

ON THE east bank of the Euphrates, lying to the north of the ancient site of Babylon, and south of the territory of Mesopotamia, was a prosperous town named Tirech. There five hundred years before, when the Babylonian Empire was in the height of its worldly splendor, stood one of its prosperous towns, Allasar, a rendezvous for traders from the ships on the southward seas, and from the rich agricultural districts to the north and east. Though the splendor of Allasar and its Babylonian refinements had long since passed away, the later town of Tirech had succeeded in building up a prosper-

ous appearance for itself and for the smaller villages round about, and for the towns down the southern Euphrates that looked to it for patronage. Ruins from the older days of the Babylonian institutions marked portions of the town and its environs, and in among the tents and structures of Persian design were scattered other buildings that showed the craft of Hebrew artificers and of Roman architects; for Mesopotamia was under Roman rule, and soldiers of the empire with their daring leader had ventured farther south, and found lucrative service in Tirech. The Hebrews were traders, who had, despite the difficulties of the long distance that lay between them and Judea, managed to crawl along through the various countries, and by entering intimately into the customs and manners of the intervening tribes, they had succeeded

after many generations in establishing little colonies along the country of the Euphrates, down even to Tirech and the towns toward the sea.

One of the latest settlers from Judea was Zacharias, the grandfather of Miriam, the wife of Balthasar. Zacharias was not like the rest of his Jewish brethren; he did not allow his interest in trading to make him unmindful of the great religious ideals which he brought with him. In his household the ceremonies of his ancient religion were performed as faithfully as the circumstances of life in a pagan land would sanction; and when Zacharias passed away he left not only his commerce to his son Eli, but what was of greater importance, his lofty spirit of religion and fidelity to the sacred traditions of his ancestors. So did Eli in his turn school his own chil-

dren in the same lessons; the prayers, the psalms, and the prophecies from their sacred writings grew into their memories and gave their lives a holy fortitude to keep the faith of Israel.

Eli's oldest daughter was Miriam. To the father the question of Miriam's marriage, when she came of age, was a matter of very great anxiety. He dreaded the terrible customs which endangered the virtue of young unmarried women, a survival of the indecent ceremonies that were held in the temple of Beltis in Babylonian times. To Eli, then, it became imperative to secure a worthy husband for Miriam. He could hardly hope for a man of his own religion. There were only a few of his Jewish compatriots in Tirech, and they had fallen away from the teachings of their ancient faith; their love of gain and the evil morals of their environ-

ment had blinded their hearts. Eli's choice of a husband must therefore—and how the thought filled him with dread—his choice for Miriam must be from among the Gentiles. They were for the most part polygamists, but Eli would trust in God to keep his daughter and to save her children for the great hope of their fathers, for the coming of the Messias and the salvation of Israel.

Eli found a worthy son-in-law in Balthasar. From a far eastern country he came ten years before—a mere youth when he arrived in Tirech. His father's ship had burned at the seacoast, and Balthasar, with the great learning that he had acquired at home, easily obtained employment as a teacher in the town. With his servants and the money which was saved from the disaster at sea he enabled himself to pur-

sue his quest for knowledge in Tirech, and to gather, amid the ruins in the adjacent districts, all he could from ancient Babylonian literature and science. In his search for learning and his desire to live according to the best principles that he found in his studies, he came to admire Eli and his household; for Eli had no part in the licentiousness of the times, and in trade he was honest and industrious to the highest degree. Balthasar made no effort to acquire the wisdom which Eli and his children learned from their sacred books. There was the knowledge of the true God; there was the law of life given to their ancestors by God Himself. But the Jews, though they possessed these priceless treasures, were hated and despised. Eli therefore did not impose his religious views on Balthasar, nor did the latter ever number

the parchments in Eli's house among the things to be investigated. He did not have the native hatred for the Jews, but in his heart of hearts he felt a silent pity for the folly of their creed.

When Balthasar came to marry Miriam he fully assured her that she might maintain all of her religious observances, and teach them to the children; for he knew that a religion that had made so good a woman as Miriam should suffice for his children.

Eli passed away, leaving his vast trade in the keeping of his son-in-law. To his high standing as one of the learned men of the town Balthasar added the influence that wide commerce brought him. Peace marked the life of his household, and prosperity with a good name gave him the first place among the men of Tirech. One only regret came to Miriam with each pass-

ing day, a feeling of growing sorrow because Balthasar did not worship the God of Israel. The busy life of trade which he followed always with integrity filled his hours with many anxieties; and his investigations in pagan religions which with each passing generation faded away as the seasons of rain and sun—these occupied his mind, and held him aloof, strange as it must seem, from the wisdom and holiness that he might have had of his wife's religion.

So did he remain with the years; but all the more earnestly did his devoted Miriam and the children offer prayers for the conversion of Balthasar. And the time eventually came when it seemed to Miriam that the sacrifice of their afflicted hearts would find some help of God.

One evening in the spring-time, when Balthasar was about to close his shop,

a stranger appeared with a pack of wares upon his back and bundles in either hand. He was a Jewish peddler who had just come to Tirech, and seeing the name "Eli" stamped on the outer post he concluded that he might meet some fellow countryman in this shop. Balthasar conversed with him for awhile, and then led the stranger home with him, for he wanted Miriam and his children to enjoy what talk the stranger might have concerning the Holy City.

Miriam had just been reciting a portion of the prophecy of Daniel to her children. It was the famous passage that told of the appointed time of the coming of the Messias: "Seventy weeks are shortened upon Thy people, and upon Thy holy city, that transgression may be finished, and sin may have an end, and iniquity may be abolished,

and everlasting justice may be brought, and vision and prophecy may be fulfilled; and the Saint of saints may be anointed."

Miriam and her children had finished their evening prayer—the prayer of ardent hope in the salvation that was to come, and of thanksgiving that now the appointed time was near at hand, the seventy weeks of years were now near their end. Jael, her faithful servant, entered to announce that the master had come with a traveler, Ochozias was his name, from the land of her fathers; that he brought wares from Damascus and perhaps tidings of good news from Judea. Miriam made haste to have the guest welcomed after the manner of Hebrew hospitality. Soon did Ochozias tell them all that was good to hear of Israel. A strange feeling was upon the land, he told them, that salvation

was soon to come—that the seventy weeks of Daniel's prophecy were now terminating, and all the people hoped that the Messias would soon appear. Couriers of Rome, he added, had been sent out to the provinces to order an enrollment of all the peoples in their native places. The world under the Roman eagles was in peace at last. Men were moving on to obey the imperial mandate. And as he came down the country of the Euphrates, he had seen many people making ready for their voyage; Medes, Parthians, and Persians with their caravans for the east and south, Armenians marching northwards, and the people of Asia Minor and even of Greece going west to their own countries—all glad for the incitement to travel which the royal edict gave them. War and warlike tribes were not a menace, for Rome

marked well the roads with strong fortresses. Offense from natives or travelers would bring death to them from the Roman soldiery; and so, concluded Ochozias, many people, even of ordinary means, had taken advantage of the security of the roads to journey back to their native homes.

All that night Miriam remained in prayer. Her little daughter, Ruth, was ill and her bed had been moved to the roof for the clear, cool air. Jael sat near Ruth to minister to her wants, and Miriam from a secluded portion of the roof turned her eyes often toward the starlit heavens, and often repeated the prayer out of Isaias, "Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just; let the earth be opened, and bud forth a Saviour."

In the morning she called Balthasar aside and poured out to him all the feel-

ings that swayed her heart. Never before had she directly tried to interest him in her religious hopes. Now she must make this appeal; would he undertake a journey to the Holy City? Would he go to represent her and her children at the great temple and have their names enrolled in Bethlehem, the city of their fathers? Would he take their son David and dedicate him to the service of the great King that was to come? Oh, that she could accompany him, that she, too, might see the land of Juda! But that could not be, for Ruth's illness made it impossible. The fervor of her entreaty brought tears to her eyes, and she flung herself weeping at the feet of Balthasar. He gently lifted her to her feet, and held her in in his arms and remained in silence for a few minutes. Then came his answer: he could not think of going.

Was he to abandon the calls of trade which at that season were more urgent than ever? Was he to forego the esteem of the town, all the high repute he enjoyed among the folk of Tirech for wisdom, and tempt them to cry "Fool" at him for making a perilous and nonsensical journey? Was he to have the finger of scorn pointed at him when the people learned that he was quitting Tirech merely to satisfy the whimsical notions of his Jewish wife? And then as Balthasar realized how painful were these words, which cut Miriam's heart, he gently led her to a seat in the garden that relief might come to her. While there he told her stories of the great legends of Babylon, fragments out of the Gilgamesh and the Adapa. He did not try to shock his wife with his doubts in the gods, or with his unbelief in any religion. But the

heroes of the Gilgamesh had passed away, he said, and their memory was as the dust of the plains; Anu and Bel and Ea, the gods that were strong once in mighty Babylon, had now no more the regard of men. Their temples were in ruins, and the gods were a mockery.

Balthasar went away to the commerce of the day; but Miriam kept faithful to prayer. Once she thought of calling David to tell him that he must go to the Holy City; she would secure the father's permission; she would find a kinsman to take him; but she left that thought for the prayer that filled her soul, as she kept watch by the side of Ruth. Great was her trust in prayer, though she had great cause to be weak in hope. Her husband's irreligion, his interest in business, his attention to old pagan lore, and his fear of the scoffing of men—all these would

make it difficult for Balthasar to yield to her ardent request.

Early that afternoon Balthasar returned from the shop. His face was aglow with some thought or knowledge that had come to him, his eyes shone with enthusiasm; and taking Miriam and his children, he went directly to the shaded room where little Ruth was lying, hoping that his narrative would interest her. His story was about some traders from the east who had arrived that day in Tirech. They brought rumors of a strange light in the heavens which an old man, Gaspar, had seen, a light that appeared far in the west, that betokened, according to the learning of this aged seer, the birth of a great king that was to be. Balthasar recounted all that he had asked and heard about the star and about the seer who had started with his caravan many leagues

away to journey in the direction of the west.

Miriam's heart was overjoyed at the narrative; within her soul high hopes beat for Balthasar and the fulfillment of her prayer. Surely now, she said, Balthasar will go; surely his quest of learning will lead him on to Jerusalem in the west. But, alas, when after the evening meal they had little Ruth brought to the roof, and as they watched the stars come silently one by one into the dark heavens above them, Balthasar for many minutes remained deep in silent thought, then raising his head, and looking far to the west, he said: "It will be a long, dangerous journey for the old man, and to what end! The great wanderings of Gilgamesh came to naught, through a life of pain, and to utter uselessness."

But Miriam fixed her eyes in another

direction, gazing steadily as if for some good message. Lo! With a glad cry that even caused Ruth to open wide her eyes and look up, she seized her husband's arm and pointed toward the western horizon. There a wonderful glow seemed to fill the sky above the region of the great desert. It was not from the sun; over an hour ago the last glimmer of daylight had vanished before the night; nor were there stars to be seen in that portion of the sky. Yet as the watchers on the roof gazed steadily toward the strange light—which to Miriam brought hope of some message from the Holy City and to Balthasar a prospect of new study in astronomy—the white splendor in the sky began by degrees to contract, to grow smaller in its dimensions, but intenser in the radiant glow towards the center; and then slowly, yet percepti-

"The star," whispered Miriam, with suppressed awe, as she turned to Balthasar.—*Page 71.*

bly, as they gazed in mute astonishment, the light was changed into a compact crystalline mass that shone like a brilliant star.

"The star," whispered Miriam, with suppressed awe, as she turned to Balthasar. Tears, in which the wondrous light was reflected, filled her eyes. She drew David and Deborah to her side, and they knelt by the cot of Ruth. Miriam could not speak; her heart had the strange emotions that might have come to it at the apparition of an angel or at a voice direct from heaven.

Balthasar withdrew to a corner of the roof and remained there in silent thought, as he kept a steady gaze on the brilliant and unusual luminary. To him it seemed that the starlike light varied in distance; now it appeared to be quite near, only out beyond the walls of Tirech. Then he would rub his

eyes, and look again, and it seemed far away across the wide desert. A luminous glow, like a streamer of light, fell from it, pointing down to the earth.

Presently, after David and his sisters fell asleep, Miriam came quietly to the side of her husband. She looked into his face, searching it for some thought to see if he might speak a consoling word to her. Then seizing his hand she said with all the most hopeful tone of her voice: "It is the star of which you heard to-day, Balthasar. It is the star that tells of the King. Do not your books say so?"

Balthasar gazed steadily on in silence. Miriam gently placed her head upon his shoulder, and after a few minutes said with all the earnest appeal of her heart; "Balthasar, O my Balthasar! Will he go forth to where the star is brightest?" She repeated a

verse out of Exodus. "In the evening you shall know that the Lord hath brought you out of the land of Egypt; and in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord."

Balthasar made no answer. His own thoughts were full enough of questionings within his mind. He motioned Miriam to a seat beside him; but he did not interrupt his watch. Still the star shone brightly, now seeming near, and then standing far off in the west, with the pale streamer falling toward the earth.

"Balthasar," whispered Miriam, as she rose to come to his side.

He turned and took her hand. "A strange thing it is in very truth," he said, bowing his head in wonderment.

"But, Balthasar," said Miriam, "even the books of eastern men seem to know of its meaning, and your great love of

learning ought to win of you the desire to go. Shines not the star over the Holy City? O, Balthasar, the seventy weeks of years are ended, and salvation unto our people, Israel, is nigh!"

He was in no mood to talk. With a gentle voice he asked Miriam to go to her night's rest. Jael was attending Ruth, and Miriam would need repose for the morrow. But she sought a little alcove, not far from the cot of Ruth, and there she spent the remainder of the night in fervent prayer, begging the great God to lead her husband forth, that so herself and her children might pay their homage to the Messias. Before her mind rose all the objections that she felt Balthasar would present again on the morrow; his business occupations, the scorn he did not want to have of the town for his journey on a Jewish pilgrimage, and the atheism

which he had taken from his studies in other religions. But Miriam was more earnest in prayer; all the night through, now raising her hands aloft, now bending forward in humble entreaty, she repeated the strong supplications that the great heart of Israel had in times past sent up to the throne of God.

The long hours of prayer found joy awaiting her in the morning. Balthasar, who had taken but one short hour of sleep, came to her and calmly said: "I will go; the star beckons me forth; and if it fail not, I shall see the cause of its appearance. David will come, and we will take our most perfect casket of gold to greet the mysterious King."

Miriam, whose joy at these words was akin to ecstasy, stood with her arms about David and Deborah. The father stooped to kiss his little invalid

daughter before he went forth for the day. When he arose he gazed for some minutes over the outlying country, catching glimpses of the Euphrates and broken fragments of canals. A gentle breeze, laden with the delicious odors of spring-time, blew across from the east. Balthasar looked at his family and said, "David may come with me. To-day I will make ready the retinue. I must appoint men over my business, and I will arrange with the Roman officer to guard our home while we are away."

CHAPTER V

THE PART OF MIRIAM

TO MRS. GRAY this speech of Balthasar seemed, at first, to be the chief point of interest in the play. This was, she thought, the meaning of the piece, its morality, as it might be called, the struggle of a soul, through the barriers of a dark and hostile world round about it, out to the freedom of the plains where God was accessible. The bigoted tendencies and prejudices of youthful associations had blighted that soul; clouds with increasing terrors of darkness hung over it from the pursuit of erroneous studies; the cares of trade and the over-anxious love of

wealth gnawed at it unceasingly; fear of a scoffing mob or rather the slavery of human respect, to use a modern phrase, robbed it of that virile independence of which it boasted possession; and so, in a word, the last state of that soul was becoming worse than the first. But rescue came to it. Balthasar, despite the dangers that threatened him with spiritual ruin, kept true to the best principles which the law of reason spoke within him; and when the great occasion came to enter into the truth, when that grace, which invites, albeit remotely at times, the soul of every person to the kingdom of God, came in these perilous circumstances to Balthasar he was courageous to give it the humble acceptance of his mind and the strong determination of his will. He set his face toward the light; he would follow the star to the very end, be the world,

in a thousand ways, against him or with him.

This was the crowning lesson of the play, as Mrs. Gray thought, when she first listened to Kevin's portions of the story. Her interest in her own husband's spiritual welfare, her hope that in God's good time he would come to the light, her constant thought of him, multiplied by countless little acts of devotion as the days went on—all this translated the meaning of the play to her own reading of it. Mr. Gray was the counterpart of Balthasar; their lives ran, in the essential constituents, along parallel lines. Accidentally there were little dissimilarities, but fundamentally, in view of the important problems of life, the household in Tirech was now, almost two thousand years later, the home of the Grays in Boston.

The true morality play, however,

must possess the classic quality of universality in its appeal, and this, Mrs. Gray after a time came to see was contained in "Balthasar." It was wider in scope than the mere drawing of a picture for her husband's consideration. There was a line of conduct for herself to imitate, an ideal pattern for her eyes to look upon steadily, to make it the measure of her own endeavors. This was the heroic fortitude of Miriam's life, her perseverance in a great cause through patience and prayer, winning at length for Balthasar the efficacious grace of his high vocation to the light that is of God.

The part of Miriam became, as the days wore on, an example to the soul of Mrs. Gray. Her interest in the play grew into religious reverence; and though she could not allow her enthusiasm to force itself into the attention

of her husband, she had taken a lesson from Miriam, and daily she grew stronger in the great hope that God would in time guide her own dear husband, the loving and devoted father of her little children, to the light of the true faith. Patience must be her portion for the present, and courage to pay the cost of great sacrifices; for, there must be such payment to make, if, as Miriam, she would obtain the great reward. The long vigil of Miriam, her incessant heroism in face of every difficulty during the weeks of preparation and the months of Balthasar's pilgrimage read an unmistakable message to Mrs. Gray. Would she support her burden of sorrow, of tearful anxiety? Would her soul bear the affliction that had come to Miriam?

There was the attitude of Tirech, the hostile sneers and threats of the

town, as Balthasar had predicted. When the news of his journey was bruited among the people, when they learned the purpose of his pilgrimage—that he was going to enroll the names of his wife and children in Bethlehem, the ancient city of their fathers, and that he was going to follow a star, and lay his choicest treasure at the feet of a new-born king, the inhabitants of Tirech forgot their former regard for Balthasar and the worth that had made of him the leading man among them. Praise and the speech of kindness they shook from their thoughts of him, and harsh words grew on their tongues into the vilest language of insult. "Behold the Jew," they would cry from some housetop as he passed by. "The fool of a Jew," the children on the street learned to yell at him from the sneers of their elders. "The fool that was a

wise man." became a by-word in the chatter of the women.

But Balthasar was a man of intrepid character and determination. He would pursue his road, and if all Tirech cried out in one thundering voice of derision and threat he would not turn a single step from his proposed journey. Trade fell away from his shop, and a despicable Jew in a neighboring part of the town had profited by his loss. But Balthasar would not change the purpose that ruled now within his soul; and stronger did it grow as he learned to despise the hollow respect of men, the slavish tyranny of the world's opinions. Popularity, he came to realize, is an unsubstantial shadow, that follows a man when the sun is shining, but leaves him if a cloud passes overhead. And he found that the world, with all its empty boasting

about impartiality to the consciences of men, does not reverence or even respect every independence of soul which some persons, following their highest impulses, want to claim as their birthright.

And Miriam—always now the object of Mrs. Gray's loving regard—bore the trials with heroic patience and prayer. Stronger grew the supplicating soul of Miriam during the days of preparation. And when the hour for departure came, how fierce was the storm of grief within her breast, despite the joy which she thought would be hers at the going forth of David and his father. All the afternoon, during the sleep of David—for the first stages of the journey were to be made in the night-time—Miriam knelt beside his cot and called God's protection on her boy, while the waves of motherly sorrow

clashed within her soul. Was the sound of his merry voice or the clasp of his loving arms ever to be hers again? Would the sweet smile of his dear face ever light the rooms again in that house? Where would he be away in a strange land when his darling sister, Ruth, whispered her last farewell to their home? For Miriam felt that the season of December rain would bear too hard on the waning health of her beloved invalid.

Yet through all the pangs of grief and the bitter clouds of tears Miriam kept the light of faith and hope shining brightly in her soul. The star marked brightly its place in the heavens; salvation unto Israel was nigh; the Messias would bring the strength of God; her David would be protected, and angels might come to take little Ruth to see the star.

Beautiful was the moonlit night in September when Balthasar assembled his magnificent train of attendants in the courtyard before his house. The coolness of the night air would be refreshing to the pilgrims as they journeyed up the Euphrates. Shelter from the heat of the day they might find in the subterranean chambers of the serdabs along by the river in Mesopotamia, or in the shadow of huge mounds of broken pottery and brickdust, the debris that marked the site of ancient palaces. The moonlight would serve them well for the marches by night. There were no other lights to be seen except the strange crystalline brilliancy of the mysterious star in the west.

Balthasar marshaled his servants with their camels and donkeys in the courtyard, and Miriam, all the while, was showering her tenderest affections

on David. In a short time a crowd of people, made up of the rabble of Tirech and of many who in years past had posed as respectable folk, assembled outside the walls of the courtyard, and began a programme of vituperation and threatening clamor. Balthasar listened for a few moments, and then taking Miriam to the roof of the house he showed her how to wave a signal light to the station of the Roman soldiers. Balthasar, with the promise of a large sum of money, had made a contract with the Roman soldiers for the protection of his house during his absence. A signal for them to come was the waving of a torch by night and of a white cloak by day.

Soon after Miriam had given the sign, in view of the soldiers on the hill, a band of Roman veterans came down the street and quietly but resolutely

drove the rabble away to other quarters of the city and kept them there for the night.

"It was," as Mrs. Gray remarked to herself, when she stopped to consider the incident, "the action of the State, which, while it did not positively assist the religious pursuits of its subjects, did, however, protect them in the accomplishment of their conscientious and righteous conduct."

Then came to Miriam the long days and nights of loneliness. Apprehensions that Balthasar might not proceed, owing to some fascination by the way, filled her soul at times with dreadful anguish. Once a trader from the upper country of Mesopotamia brought news to Tirech that Balthasar, while crossing the Goaspes River, had happened on a field of marvelous jewels, "thick with beryls more precious than gold": that

he had established a camp there and would spend months at the field to work the wondrous harvest of precious stones. Again a rumor reached her, and it was partly confirmed by a short message direct from her husband, that he had met with wonderful mounds in Lasr, full of ancient markings and interesting relics of other centuries. What material, he said, for years of investigation!

But the faithful part of Miriam went on bravely and confidently at home. Valiantly did she endure, like the women of whom she knew in Hebrew stories; and like them she fortified herself with the strong armor of prayer. Brightly was the star set in the sky above Judea; she knew that its shining was for Balthasar, and it would not grow dim. Even when the December mists hung heavily over Tirech and shut

out the sky from their sight, she could discern from her station on the roof the powerful light westward, piercing the wet, gray atmosphere, as if it was stationed only a league away. The star gave her much to talk of with Ruth, who was fast declining in a room below. And how joyously the mother and Deborah went to the invalid's cot to tell her the latest tidings from their father: that as he reached the great road from the east where it crosses the Euphrates, he met the gorgeous train of Gaspar, coming from the regions of the rising sun, and that the caravans were now journeying together southward toward the star.

A vicious report was raised in Tirech, for the purpose of torturing Miriam and her children, that Balthasar and his retinue were plundered by a band of Armenian mountaineers, and that David

had been taken off a slave. Miriam did not suffer long under this cruel rumor; for a few days afterward a message came to her from the Roman station. Some soldiers who had been sent to Tirech from Damascus reported that Balthasar and Gaspar had entered that city, filling it with wonderment at the splendor of their accompanying pageantry; that, while tarrying a few days in Damascus, they met another traveler named Melchior, like unto them in the magnificence of his train, and that the three gorgeous caravans had started south, out the road to Jerusalem to find the palace of King Herod.

Psalms of praise came from the full heart of Miriam and rang through the house at this glad news. The Roman soldiers had marched quickly; and so Miriam reasoned that Balthasar, even though his pageant moved very slowly,

must be by this time in the little city of her fathers, in Bethlehem of Juda. Oh, the joy that filled her soul! Oh, the ecstasy that was hers! Her name and her children's names were now enrolled upon the lists at Bethlehem. And Balthasar had found the King, the Promised One, the Salvation of Israel!

In her transport of holy joy, she took the hand of Deborah, and both went directly to the roof, leaving Jael to attend to the invalid Ruth. Her eyes looked intently in the direction of the star. And behold, as she stood there, the great star began to change; the compact, brilliant mass widened into a diffused light that soon made the western sky all aglow as with the golden splendor of a setting sun. Miriam and Deborah, amid their tears, uttered fervent prayers of thanksgiving. Miriam

whispered to her daughter, "David has given his name to the new King: he has given your name, Deborah. We are enrolled at Bethlehem. Our father, Balthasar our father, has seen the King."

They both went quickly to Ruth's chamber. The mother's mind was to bring the invalid, though she was at the point of death, to the roof that she might look upon the golden glory in the western skies. But Ruth could not be moved. Her little life was fading away fast. An hour afterward her eyes seemed to be closing in the sleep of death. Miriam leaned forward and whispered into Ruth's ear. The child recognized the voice. Her poor, weak eyelids opened for the last time.

"Ruth, my own darling Ruth," gently spoke the mother, "father has entered the Holy City, and Ruth, my

heart's treasure, David has given your name to the new King."

The little eyelids closed. Miriam bent over her dead child. Her mother's soul was bowed in grief, but she had a consolation to withstand her sorrow.

It was a consolation that Mrs. Gray found easy to understand as she pondered at this portion of the story. Henceforth she took to the love of her heart the part of Miriam.

CHAPTER VI

A FIRST REHEARSAL

TOWARD the middle of December, Mrs. Gray, alive with holy feelings inspired by the play, was as eager for the night of the performance as were the young actors themselves. The speeches of David, which Kevin was to pronounce, were not numerous, and his part as a cameleer in the magnificent procession through the strange countries behind the stage scenery would be visible only to the eye of imagination. But Mrs. Gray often found occasion from David's part to enliven fragments of the evening hours at home.

"Kevin will need no excursion next summer," she said playfully to Mr.

Gray one evening, hoping to interest him more in the one subject of importance to the household during those weeks.

"Or perhaps," added the father, taking up the innocent banter, "he may grow anxious to visit the real Mesopotamia." Then, addressing Kevin directly: "You ought to be acquainted with that part of the world pretty thoroughly by now. Your March of the Ten Thousand was through those regions." Mr. Gray had followed Kevin's daily lessons in the Anabasis.

"Yes, dad," Kevin replied, "but we don't go up to the sea this time. We turn south when we meet Gaspar."

"And Malachy, too, Kev," said Hugh, wishing to be one in the talk of savants.

"Not Malachy, dear," was Mrs. Gray's correction; "it is Melchior, and

he joins the troupe at Damascus; that is quite near the end of the journey."

"Has he a camel, too, whole lots of camels?" asked the child.

"Of course he has," said Brendan, as if wiser: "They didn't have automobiles in those days, or bicycles either."

"But they had clothes suited for automobiling," said the father, with gentle laughter; "they took the dust well."

To Mrs. Gray the simple fun in these conversations was a welcome spirit in the home. For she hoped that her husband would thus get a desire to witness the Morality, and take wisdom of Balthasar. From many ways of judging she knew that her husband felt some aversion to Catholic clergymen; that he showed embarrassment whenever he came face to face with one of them; and while he was an ardent admirer of the Archbishop's public discourses and

praised the principles which Father Hughes, the Head Master at St. Moville's, taught in his frequent lectures on the labor question, yet he would not easily outgrow his childhood prejudices about "the Romish priesthood." She had the conviction, therefore, that the presence of her husband in the school auditorium should be set down as improbable or even impossible. And her feelings were confirmed when she went one afternoon to his calendar of engagements and looked anxiously for January Fifth, the eve of the Epiphany, and the night for "Balthasar." She read the following memorandum on the calendar leaf: "Last night of the Social Congress; accepted invitation to be present on the stage. Among the speakers are Lord Masley of England and the Catholic Archbishop of Boston."

At this information Mrs. Gray's last

ray of hope flickered out and left the darkness of regret behind. Then she whispered "Miriam" to herself, and her face lighted up, and she wore her happiest mood just as Mr. Gray entered from his office. He seemed out of sorts, and he hinted at a new depression in his business. Before he had time to unburden his mind of financial troubles, Kevin returned from school, and the marked absence of his accustomed vivaciousness attracted the attention of both father and mother. His eyes might easily lead to the conjecture that they had been wet with tears very recently; and his continued lack of buoyancy, especially that this was Wednesday, the eve of the weekly holiday, betrayed the grief of his heart.

The first to feel his cheerless manner, Mrs. Gray said as pleasantly as possible: "Kevin lost some marks to-day.

Or perhaps there is to be no outing at school to-morrow."

He looked up and tried to put on a cheerful face. "It's the play, Mother; the first rehearsal is to-night, I mean the first full rehearsal, and I can't go. That's what's the matter."

The announcement was a surprise even to the father, and he asked: "Why, lad, why can't you go?"

"Well, it's like this, Father," said Kevin disconsolately; "they are strict at school about having small boys out at night."

"And that's a good principle, I must say, and I like them for that," said the father, much to the pleasure of Mrs. Gray, who was delighted at any praise of St. Moville's from her husband. "I wish," he went on, "the other schools would adopt that ruling."

"And Mr. Russell," said Kevin look-

ing up, "though he would like to have everybody attend, now that it is so near the night, insists that no boy of the two lower classes can come to-night unless he has a companion from home, or lives quite near some other boy in the play. And I guess I'm the only one will be absent, and I'll spoil the rehearsal."

Mrs. Gray tried to think of some suggestion that would relieve the situation, but none came to her. Much to her surprise her husband had a proposal.

"But, Kevin, if Mr. Russell knew that you could have our permission to go—mother might telephone him—and I could see you to the car and meet you there when you return."

"I told him of that, Father," answered the boy, "but he very kindly insisted that it would be preferable to have it the other way, no small boys out

at night without a companion. Of course he told me not to worry, that I should still have the part of David, and that he would rehearse me privately with any other boys who might be absent."

Kevin took his disappointment quite bravely as the hour went past. He realized that his father was the only possible companion to obtain, and that it was useless to expect him to go out to St. Moville's. But the father deserved better judgment. He noticed the silence that followed the announcement; he had a father's devotion, and he gave it to this little trouble. Finally, when the dinner hour was drawing near, he said to his wife, "Margaret, you might have dinner a little earlier tonight. I think I can afford an evening off, and I will go with Kevin to the rehearsal."

There was magic in the statement, for immediately a spirit of joy ran about the house. Mrs. Gray's elation knew no bounds, though she had to conceal many of her reasons for feeling joyful.

Dinner was soon ready, "for," Mrs. Gray said to herself, "what if somebody should call now and spoil everything? What if some meeting of the firm should come up to call Mr. Gray away and prevent him from going to St. Moville's?"

No caller disturbed the proceedings, however. In good time Kevin reached the school hall with his father. The rehearsal started promptly; and Mr. Gray, without meeting Mr. Russell or any of the teachers, walked to a seat in a shadowed corner of the hall. His study was chiefly the conduct of the boys as they played about among the

seats, when they were not engaged on the stage. He could not fail to notice and to admire that, however heartily the boys diverted themselves, they were not rough or boisterous, and that at the least sign from the man who was directing the play in his black soutane and biretta they stopped their games immediately and went to their posts on the stage. His eyes watched closely the doings of the black-gowned director; how kindly, yet how authoritatively he spoke; how reverent was the attitude of the boys to him; and, during the intermissions, how intimately they could approach him and converse with him and laugh over the awkward actions of some of the cast.

The play itself did not make an impression on Mr. Gray; for it was mutilated through the necessity of delays and reconstructions, and unimposing

because of the lack of costume and other scenic paraphernalia. He afterward mentioned the splendid singing of the shepherds who came up to the Temple in Jerusalem from Bethlehem. But the Morality itself did not appear to his mind's eye or speak to his heart.

Yet Mrs. Gray, remembering Miriam, did not abandon hope. When the night of the next rehearsal arrived (which was always before a holiday at the school), she took new hope, though her tranquil demeanor did not manifest it, hearing her husband whisper to Kevin that he would accompany him again to St. Moville's. And so it happened with the other rehearsals; and thus by degrees the Morality revealed itself to the father. The smoother action of the players, the perfect enunciation of the speeches, the united progress of the various scenes, leading to

the magnificent grouping for a tableau at the close—all these made it possible to follow "Balthasar" with surer understanding. Mr. Gray possessed sufficient acuteness of mind to apprehend things and thoughts which lay between the lines. He did not imagine that he had such a faculty as the "understanding heart." He surely had heard, at some time or other, of the grace of God; but it was a thing that he did not reckon with.

Mrs. Gray knew of its value, however, and of its supreme need for what is highest in the actions of life. She knew that it waited on prayer, and prayer became as frequent with her as the duties of her days would permit. Though she had for many years been accustomed to send alms to some of the convents, she now took her little offerings herself to the austere reception-

room of the Poor Clares in the crowded, dingy quarter of the city about Bennett Street. She wanted the help of their penitential lives for her intention. And she felt a consolation when she realized that whether the Morality at St. Moville's should reach into the lives of others or not, it had placed two strong pieces of spiritual armor in her hands—patience and persevering prayer for the years to come. "Balthasar" was already a success in her estimation, even before it was presented in full magnificence in the school theater.

CHAPTER VII

THE SCORN OF TIRECH

MR. GRAY was surprised as he sat one morning in his office to hear a remark about himself which Perkins, a small stockholder in the firm, made to Eliot, the senior member. The transom of his office door was open. He was to have gone over to Lowell that morning to visit one of the company's factories. And it was his imagined absence, he thought, which prompted Perkins to speak out.

Perkins said: "Eliot, what's got into Gray? My wife was on a Boulevard car last night, and she saw Gray get on at the Catholic place near Chestnut Lake."

"His boy is there at school, I hear," answered Eliot. "His wife belongs to them, you know." There was a slight suspicious quality of sneering in his tone.

"And Gray, I suppose," continued Perkins, "has to learn his Roman Catechism by heart."

Mr. Gray had no relish for eavesdropping. He seized a big ledger from his desk and let it fall to the floor. The noise would indicate to them that he was not in Lowell. They seemed confused at the revelation; for Perkins hemmed and stammered, as he said to Eliot, both of them moving away, "And—er—I suppose—er—you'll be at the City Club show to-night."

Mr. Gray sat back in his chair a trifle perplexed over the short dialogue that he had heard. He knew that Perkins was not inclined to scatter praises in

behalf of Edward Gray, the president of the firm and almost one-half owner of its stock. But what had Perkins to sneer about now? What business of his was it how Gray chose to spend his evenings? Perkins would have his answer if he wanted it. It would not be in conciliating phrases either. He should be told that Catholics—and Gray knew more about them than Perkins did—minded their own business in a lot of things better by a whole bookful than such fellows as Perkins ever minded theirs. He knew Catholics, Gray did, and they never went around blaming and damning away ahead of time other people's consciences. But Mr. Gray put aside his indignation after a few moments, and he began to consider some new thoughts.

"After all," he said to himself, "Perkins is something of myself, as I

was a year or two ago. I would have probably made the same remark, if Eliot had been frequenting St. Moville's. It's just the attitude of our world, that's all. A fellow can run into any kind of belief or unbelief, but his respectability vanishes if he turns an ear to the other side. We have an Inquisition set up by popular opinion, and I don't know that they ever had anything more despicable in other countries than we have here in this house. Why, I'll bet that they'll revive the spirit of our grandfathers and get to imagine that our recent depression in business is partly due to my visits to that 'Catholic place,' as Perkins contemptuously called it."

He swung his chair around and stood up. He reached for his valise and looked at his watch, to note the time for the next train to Lowell. He waited

at the door for a moment, and paused at a thought which came to him: "This Balthasar was up against the very same thing nearly two thousand years ago. The world keeps pretty much the same."

When he reached the door at Congress Street, Eliot was there and asked: "Off to Lowell, Ed? Will you be back in time for the show at the City Club?"

"I'll return on an early afternoon train," he answered; "but I must miss the jolly night at the Club." Then pausing for a few moments he added with an air of nonchalance, "I must accompany my boy out to his school where there is to be a dress rehearsal of a Morality play. The Social Congress to-morrow night, you know, will keep me from seeing the students in their great performance. The dress rehearsal will make up for the loss." He

stepped toward the street, then turned to Eliot and asked: "Will you care to come out with me to-night? Take dinner with me and we'll go out together."

Eliot showed embarrassment. He stammered through a reply: "I promised Perkins to sit with him at the show to-night."

Mr. Gray walked out toward a car for the North Station.

He returned to his home early in the afternoon. Dinner was set an hour ahead of the usual time, that he might go with Kevin and the costumes of David in good time to St. Moville's. During the dinner Mr. Gray seemed absorbed with some consideration that kept him from being in a cheerful mood. His wife felt somewhat worried at his appearance; she wondered if it came from a continuance of business

anxieties. She asked about the turn in the firm's affairs that day.

"Why, things will go in good order," he replied, brightening, "things will get back to their regular order. It's just a hard month or two all around, and we are passing through like others." Then he waited for a few moments before he continued speaking. "Eliot and others of the house know of my going out to St. Moville's, and they are apparently riled. Who'd think that men could be so childish? And yet, Margaret," he spoke very slowly and in a low tone meant only to be heard by his wife, "do you know they can get themselves into a nasty frame of mind over some things, yes, and even do nasty, irrational things."

Mrs. Gray looked up, greatly pained at her husband's thoughts and at the surmises which they brought. She did

not even remotely conjecture that there could be a loss of power to her husband in the government of the house of Eliot, Waterman, and Gray. His portion of the stock, she knew, was still the same, and therefore his voice at the directors' meetings held its former influence. His stock gave him forty votes against sixty of all the other stockholders, and having usually the votes of some of his personal friends on his side he was the most powerful member of the company.

"Was there a meeting to be held to-night, Ed?" asked Mrs. Gray.

"No," he replied; "our regular meeting is to be held a week from to-night. But I was just thinking that Perkins might take it into his head to get nasty. He has been saying things against our Lowell concerns, and merely because they are a little down just now, and he can't see that they'll be booming again

in a few weeks, he advises selling them out. He'll make it lively at the next meeting, though he may not wait even for that, but insist on a special meeting ahead of time."

Mrs. Gray, in utter amazement, had nothing to say. She merely nodded to the children as they excused themselves and withdrew from the table to watch Kevin making a bundle of his costumes. Then she looked toward her husband.

"Now, Margaret," he said, "it certainly looks ridiculous, but I believe they'll feel squeamish toward me because I have been going out to St. Moville's. And Perkins, I imagine, knew right along that I was visiting there. I heard him say this very morning that his wife saw me get on a car out there the other evening. And perhaps he wanted me to hear what he said."

"It is too bad," Mrs. Gray said

gently; "I wonder how they can take offense at that."

"Too bad!" he said quite emphatically, "why, it's the same old story. Even suppose that I went out there for any other purpose than the one I had of accompanying Kevin, what would that be of their business? It's the old story. A man can follow his conscience, or say he follows it along several lines, but if he goes up one road—well, there is one road the world will not have him take."

At this point Kevin entered to say that his bundle was prepared. Mr. Gray in a few moments was at the doorway ready for his last trip to St. Moville's. The snow was falling when he went out. Three merry voices called to him: "Good night!"

"Don't let David fall from the camel," Margaret called out.

"This snow will keep down the dust of the plains, Kev," Brendan said, more seriously.

"Give my love to Malichior when you meet him," sang out little Hugh.

Mrs. Gray gathered the children closely to her side when they reached the study. In her heart she hoped that no visitor would come to disturb the happy group. "Miriam must keep watch to-night," she said, while the children listened to the mysterious utterance, "and we must add some prayers to-night for Balthasar, and against the scorn of Tirech, which has arisen in a part of Boston."

CHAPTER VIII

THE DRESS REHEARSAL

WHEN Mr. Gray entered the auditorium of the school theater his eyes wandered with delight around the spacious and brilliantly lighted hall, observing the merriment which possessed the young players as they moved about, up and down the aisles, laughing and flinging all manner of happy exclamations at each other in their various costumes. He felt a desire to tarry at little groups of the vivacious players; but when Kevin hurried off to the dressing-room, he walked quietly to his favorite corner of the hall. Being seated, he caught sight of Father Hughes at one of the doorways. Im-

mediately the boys went off toward the Head Master to share their fun with him.

"What do you think of this make-up, Father?" asked one boy in the attire of a shepherd.

"Here comes Balthasar," said another, pointing to one of his comrades.

"And there's Gaspar," said a third, at which they all laughed. For Gaspar pretended to be observing the heavens through a long tube.

"He's an astronomer, Father," said a pleasant little voice, "and he's great at mathematics."

And Gaspar called back, "Do I get through without an examination for that, Father?"

The signal bell sounded. The Head Master withdrew from the hall. The boys went to the stage. Presently the lights in the hall were extinguished,

and Mr. Gray looked expectantly up through the silent darkness to the stage and its picture of a streetway in an eastern city. He thought that he heard a conversation carried on in a whispering tone behind the scenes. He waited and watched. After a few minutes Mr. Russell stepped out before the lights, folded his arms, and without making any sign or speaking any word, stood there and stared out into the darkness of the hall. The boys, full of wonderment and with bated breath, looked up very solemnly from their place in the orchestra. They probably guessed that their director had an important announcement to make.

Mr. Russell moved a few paces forward, and turning his eyes toward the groups below the stage, he spoke very slowly and with a deep expression of

disappointment. "Boys, we have met with a hard misfortune. Steve Gwynne was taken sick when he got home from school to-day, and we have just received word that he will not be able to come to the play. I hope his illness is not very bad; the doctor has ordered him to remain indoors for at least two weeks. Steve, everybody knows, was a faithful member of our cast, and I am sorry that he must miss the pleasure of being here to-night."

The boys looked about from one to another. Some spoke in whispering interrogations, "Gwynne sick? He didn't look all right to-day, do you think so, Jack? Who'll take his part now?"

Then Mr. Russell advanced toward the stage steps leading down to the auditorium. He turned again toward his young players, who were watching

him intently, noting his disappointed look, and said: "Boys, you may play about for a few minutes. I will need a little time to think out a solution of our difficulty—about ten minutes—so be on hand promptly for the bell."

He stepped into one of the aisles and walked up and down, now and then leaning on the back of a seat, and pausing to work the harder at his problem. The boys had no relish for merriment. Their sense of jubilation was crushed, for the time being, at the news they heard, and the sad plight of their director and his play. In sober mood they took seats and waited, and spoke only in subdued tones.

Mr. Russell, all absorbed with the consideration he had set his mind on, proceeded slowly and with halting steps down the aisle. He stood for a moment far back in the dark part of

the hall. His elbow was almost touching Mr. Gray's shoulder, though he did not see him, nor was he aware of his presence there. His hand came down and grazed the arm of Mr. Gray, who arose directly to apologize.

Mr. Russell, somewhat startled by the unexpected appearance, turned quickly and said: "I beg pardon, I did not know that there was anybody so near."

Mr. Gray bowed very graciously and replied: "I am the one to ask pardon. I am Kevin Gray's father, and I was going to steal a free show at your rehearsal."

"You are very welcome, Mr. Gray," said the teacher, who was still laboring with the question of the missing character. Then realizing his state of distraction, he took Mr. Gray's hand again, and said heartily, "Pardon me,

Mr. Gray. Kevin's father? I am delighted to meet you. Pardon my abstracted greeting. You know—I suppose you heard me tell the cause."

"Yes, and I'm very sorry for the predicament it leaves you in," responded Mr. Gray.

"It's a puzzling situation, indeed, Mr. Gray; but we'll work a way through it, I hope. We teach the boys that one of the chief values from their lessons, the puzzling difficulties they encounter with Latin and Greek sentences, is the training it gives them to meet difficulties in later life. And surely," he paused and stood smiling for a while, "surely, we must follow our lessons about facing difficulties."

"What part did the boy have in your play?" asked Mr. Gray.

"That of Melchior, one of the Wisemen," was the response. "It is not a

very difficult part with many lines for speaking; but there were many important entrances and exits, especially toward the end, leading up to the great tableau, and it is now rather late to expect much of a boy's ingenuity."

Mr. Gray stooped to place his hat upon the seat. Then he addressed the director: "Perhaps, Mr. Russell, I could be of some service. I have attended all the rehearsals with Kevin, and, for some reason or other, I took pleasure in following the various parts quite attentively; indeed, I think I could prompt for all the entrances and exits, and repeat many of the lines. I fancy I can supply the quick, intellectual head of Melchior, though mine," and smiling, he rubbed his hand over his scant supply of hair, "mine has not the shaggy, thick covering of an eastern senior."

Mr. Russell for a few moments stood silent with astonishment at the proposal. He reached forward to take Mr. Gray's hand, and said: "This is too much to burden you with, isn't it? But—really—if it would not—would not tax your kindness, it would be a boon to us. And—as for appearance—why Melchior wears a wig and a long beard, and Gwynne, the boy who had the part, was tall, and I could eliminate your lines, if you want, or you will find it easy to read them as you kneel in the tableau."

Mr. Gray had stepped into the aisle during this speech, and moved along to assure Mr. Russell of his willingness to take the part. When they reached the stage, the director turned to his expectant players, and said: "We shall be ready in a few moments. Mr. Gray, Kevin's father, has been kind enough to

volunteer. He will take the part of Melchior."

The two proceeded to the dressing-room. When Mr. Russell returned to the hall he found some reporters of the Boston papers waiting to ask him for the names of the cast and for other details that might supply matter for their notes. The names were given, and then, struck by the novel turn in affairs, Mr. Russell told the reporters of the illness of one boy, and how his part of Melchior was to be taken by Mr. Edward Gray of Boston. Neither the business nor the religion of Mr. Gray was known to the director; he very naturally thought that Kevin's father was a Catholic.

"Gray?" asked one of the newspaper scribes, "Edward Gray? Is he the Gray of Eliot, Waterman, and Gray on Congress Street?"

"That I do not know," answered Mr. Russell. "Just a moment," he said to the reporters; then he called Kevin. "Is your father's business house on Congress Street?"

"Yes, sir," came the response.

The reporters noted this as of great importance and went away.

The signal bell sounded. One by one the scenes in "Balthasar" passed before the lights. There were imperfections and reprehensions of them, but Mr. Russell had an encouraging word. "They say, boys, that a dress rehearsal should go poorly, that it augurs well for the final performance. A good night for all of us to-morrow—and now good night to everybody."

"Good night, Mr. Russell," rang out the chorus of voices.

The hour was late, and the little players slipped out of the hall and ran

to meet their cars. Kevin and his father walked quietly away. Mr. Gray, when in the light of the car, brought forth a paper containing the few lines of Melchior, and began to commit them to memory, while Kevin enjoyed a joyous talk with his schoolmates. When they reached their home on Crawford Street Mr. Gray kissed Kevin "good night." The boy stole quietly up to his mother's room. There was a light burning, and the mother was kneeling as Kevin entered. She held him in her arms, while he told the wonderful story of that night. Then they knelt down together to say night prayers, ending with a fervent reading of the *Magnificat.*

CHAPTER IX

A MORNING BY THE EUPHRATES

ON New Year's day, a Social Congress, with a very elaborate programme, opened its sessions in the Marlborough Hotel. Representatives of Boston culture had labored with all diligence to make perfect every detail of the five days of the Congress. Every Professor Thingumbob who had a pet theory about education or a patent medicine for social ills was solicited from all the English-speaking world to bring his open-sesame to Boston. The cost of all this was great, but Back Bay generosity in such a cause was greater.

The many sessions were held with brilliant eclat. Boston outdid itself in

rapt attentiveness; and Beacon Street thrilled in the delectable atmosphere.

And now it was the fifth and last day of the great congress. At an early hour in the morning two directors of the final session, which was to be held that evening in Beaconfield Hall, were seated in the library of the Marlborough. They were waiting for Mr. Thorndike, the other director; the final arrangements for the evening were to be discussed at this meeting.

"Mr. Deville," said Mr. Van Horne to his associate, "I have our portion of the mail, and while we are waiting for Mr. Thorndike we might glance at it. It would save time, don't you know."

Mr. Van Horne bowed in assent, and bent forward to hear the contents of the first letter.

"This communication is from the Archbishop—His Grace, the Arch-

bishop," said Mr. Deville, who became conscious of his position and of the formal speech that should become him on this occasion. He read from the letter:

"I thank you for the courtesy of placing me early on the programme. I was very anxious to attend the presentation of a Morality play at St. Moville's on the same evening as your Beaconfield meeting. You will excuse me if I withdraw immediately after my address. If you need a motto, as you suggested, for the announcement of my address on the programme, you may use this: *Instaurare omnia in Christo.*"

"That is a Latin phrase, I believe, Mr. Deville," said the other as the letter was folded.

"Yes," came the answer, without any comment.

"Well, perhaps, Mr. Deville, perhaps—though we must wait for Mr.

Thorndike's views on the matter—it seems to me that perhaps it would be best to eliminate, or I should say forego, the pleasure of printing any Latin on the programme."

Mr. Thorndike entered, and, as he greeted his fellow directors, he held up to their view the front page of a morning paper. There were large headlines about the congress, and all three felt delight at that. Mr. Thorndike threw the paper on the table.

Mr. Van Horne's eye caught sight of the announcement, in other headlines, about the Morality play. He took the page eagerly, saying, "This is the play to which the Archbishop alluded in his letter." Then, glancing down the column, he exclaimed in great surprise: "What is this! Mr. Edward Gray's picture! He is to be one of the participants in the play. And

here is a picture of his character, Melchior." Mr. Van Horne looked over the table to his confrères, and repeated, "Melchior—Mr. Edward Gray as Melchior."

"I noticed that," Mr. Thorndike spoke and bowed his head. His face showed surprise, but if he had any thoughts hostile to Mr. Gray he maintained his character of a committeeman in a public enterprise, and kept his mind to himself.

"But I thought he accepted our invitation to be present on the stage tonight," said Mr. Van Horne, with some excitement in his tone.

"He did," answered Mr. Deville more coolly. And then after a short pause, he continued: "And Mr. Gray is not a man of whims. He acts always with assuring deliberation. He must have had a very urgent reason for this

action. I am sorry that we shall be without him. The house of Eliot, Waterman, and Gray was a liberal benefactor toward our meeting to-night."

As Mr. Deville ended, an office boy entered with a visitor's card. In a few moments Mr. Gray appeared in the library and gave his apologies for the change in his programme; the committee had nothing to do but receive them with external courtesy.

"I am very sorry," continued Mr. Gray, "if this causes you any disappointment. It seems to me that it will not; yet I wanted to assure you of my good will toward the meeting, and to apologize for having to take another engagement. I might give you the reasons for that, but you will not want them. However, you must let me add a little contribution to that which our

house has already given." The three others hemmed through a little formal protest.

Mr. Gray stepped forward and placed his check for a hundred dollars in Mr. Thorndike's hand. "You may wish to add to the arrangements for this evening," he said, taking his hat, and moving toward the door.

"We have just learned," Mr. Deville said, "that the Archbishop wishes to attend a Morality play this evening, immediately after his address. I suppose we should have the service of an automobile for him, so that he may get there in good time."

But Mr. Gray did not take that as part of his business. He went out to catch a car for Congress Street. And as he rode along, he began to consider the apathetic reception he had just received. He did not read the paper,

for he had already run his eye over the column containing his picture and the "cut" of Melchior. He felt somewhat sorry for the notoriety which the papers gave to his action, but he knew that it was due to no intention on the part of the school authorities thus to advertise him. "Some reporter got scent of this item," he said to himself, "and his editor thought it a good thing to stuff up his paper with. I wonder if it worries Perkins this morning."

When he reached the house on Congress Street he found only the clerks, and they very active, among the rooms. On his office desk, a copy of the paper was spread out to take his eyes. And near it lay a marked note of the "Back Bay Transept." It rarely contained, in all its columns of religious news, any mention of Catholic affairs. Mr. Gray looked at the blue-

lined paragraph and read: "A Catholic play will be given at the St. Moville's School this evening. One of the characters will be assumed by Mr. Edward Gray of the well-known firm of Eliot, Waterman, and Gray. Mr. Gray's boy attends the school. His wife and children are members of the Catholic communion.

"Among the patronesses for this evening's performance are Mrs. Charlton Thornton of Elmwood Terrace, Mrs. Emile Le Roy of the French Consulate, Mrs. J. Wall Hardener of Fenway, and Mrs. Kathryn O'Toole of Beacon Street."

Mr. Gray flung the paper down, and with indignation he took up his telephone to call the city editor of the "Transept." "Give me the city editor," he demanded; and then as he waited he said to himself: "This is

certainly bad form. It's worse than that. It's the talk of a narrow-minded bigot. What's my wife and her religion got to do with this play? And it isn't a Catholic play either, and it isn't a non-Catholic play. It's a play for a man of brains, and I'll tell this fellow, too."

The city editor came to the other end of the line, and said the usual "Hello."

"Is this the city editor?" Mr. Gray did not speak in a whisper, and his voice could be heard outside of his office. "Well, see here," he went on in a rapid fire of his indignant spirit: "I'll speak to you first, and then give me the business manager. I don't want two attitudes toward me in your office. And now about that note in this morning's 'Transept.' I am Gray, Edward Gray; and I want to know what has religion got to do with my

taking part in the play at St. Moville's to-night. First of all, it isn't a Catholic play, unless you want to mean that a Morality must be Catholic. And, secondly, my wife's religion is not the reason of my being in the performance, and it should be none of your business if that was the reason."

Mr. Gray listened for a few minutes while the city editor exercised himself in his art of apologetics.

"That's well enough said," began Mr. Gray, as the editor ended, "but it was your business to look over what the reporter gives in. You say the reporter very likely was not at the rehearsal, and got the news from some fellow of another paper. Anyway you should have sent a man out there. And the thing for you to do now, the only decent thing for you to do now, is to send a man out there to-night. Do you

hear? Send a man out, some man of brains, and make him bring home an intelligent story, if he is able to analyze the play. And he can leave out slurs about other people's religion. Or if he finds that he must drag in some mention of that subject, tell him to say that the Morality play of Balthasar is a striking parallel to the experiences of many persons who have entered the Catholic Church."

The editor assured him that he would send out one of the best desk-men in the office.

"And now you will please let me speak with the business manager," said Mr. Gray, ending that conversation.

In a few moments the business manager was listening to another piece of Mr. Gray's indignation. "See here, Mr. Robinson, you have one-quarter page advertisement of ours in the

'Transept.' Yes—yes—Gray, Edward Gray of Eliot, Waterman, and Gray, Congress Street. Well, I see my wife's religion seems to be of some importance when there is question of some of my private affairs; but it does not concern my advertisement, does it? You don't tack that on to our 'ad,' do you? So I want you to stop our 'ad' in the 'Transept' right now. I have charge of our advertising, as you've known for some years, but I drop the 'Transept' from the list, and I'll drop every other paper like it, and get out an advertising sheet myself before I'll stand any of your double-dealing."

There was a pause in which the manager put forth his apologies, and his promises to rectify the matter even to the extent of having a note inserted in the evening edition.

"That's of no use," answered Mr.

Gray with vigorous animation. "It's to your interest to make such apologies, and I don't care for them. I say that I have lost respect for the 'Transept.' It talks as if it were back in Boston fifty years ago. It's narrow-minded, or as you might say, it's not good form to drag religion into a person's private business. And this play and my reason for being in it are my own private business. If I choose to lend a hand in the predicament I see another man in, just like any decent American might and should do, why should your editor, in a sneering way, allude to the church of my wife and children? No—No—that is no explanation. Take out the advertisement, I say. And I want you to understand that this is not for spite. I guess I can boast of a little more rationality than that, and if I were a Christian, at least the kind my wife is,

I might act otherwise. You might continue our advertisement if my wife were running this, for she teaches her children, and she lives up to what she teaches, 'Do good to them that malign and persecute you.' But I haven't got that religion, Robinson, and so out with our 'ad,' morning and evening editions —out with it! And I'll let you come down here for it when your editor knocks some of his smallness out of his head. Tell him, as I have just told him, to send out a capable man to look at that play, and bring home a good square account of it. The school doesn't want a boost, and I do not want a mention. But tell him to give it a critic's write-up, and leave religion out of it, and say that it is a Morality play and dreadfully modern, too."

Mr. Gray put down the telephone and left his office. He noticed Eliot

coming in from the street. He guessed that he had seen the morning papers, and very likely had commented on the news they contained; for he appeared abashed as he came up the room.

Mr. Gray saluted him cordially and with an unruffled voice: "Good morning, Eliot, I have been detained this morning. I had to go to the Marlborough to offer my apologies for not being able to attend the last meeting of the Social Congress."

"So I heard, Ed," replied the other. "Perkins showed me the picture of Melchior. And, I say, Gray," said Eliot with a slight upward inflection in his voice, "Perkins seems insistent on having our directors' meeting to-night, a special meeting. He has seen some of the holders this morning, and I believe he has secured enough for a special session. He talks a good deal, you

know, about the Lowell depression."

"But why have a special meeting?" said Mr. Gray kindly. "We meet anyway three nights from now, and the interim will give a chance to know better about Lowell. And moreover, I can't attend to-night anyway."

"So I thought, Ed," returned his partner. "We were going to the City Club, too. But Perkins will insist on the meeting."

"But see here, Eliot; Perkins has only ten votes. You have twenty and I have forty, and therefore the meeting can not take place if we object."

"But I have given Perkins my promise to attend," answered Eliot.

"You want the meeting, then?" asked Mr. Gray.

"I—really, it seemed—well, I was not over-anxious," stammered Eliot.

"Well, one of two things, Eliot," the

other asked again, "do you want the meeting or not? I say 'no' for my part."

"Really, Ed, I have acceded to Perkins's request. I thought it would humor the fellow; he keeps harping on our Lowell situation."

"He has more than that annoying him," said Mr. Gray. "I wonder if it was he that marked a copy of the 'Transept' and left it on my desk. Somebody was ridiculous enough to do that."

Mr. Eliot had nothing to say on this point. Mr. Gray turned to him and spoke again: "If you knew I had another engagement, Eliot, and you say that you did know of it, and surely you have always credited me with a share of common-sense in making engagements, why didn't you tell Perkins when he proposed the special meeting? Why didn't you tell him that I would be un-

able to attend? Why have you, who always seemed anxious for my presence, turned face about this time? It looks a little shabby, Eliot, it certainly does. I don't think I should have done that to you."

He moved away, going back to his office. Mr. Eliot did not seem anxious to continue the conversation. Mr. Gray had his own thoughts about the matter, and when he returned with his hat and valise from the office he went over to his partner again, and said, "I am going over to Lowell. I will not attend this meeting to-night. And you tell that to Perkins, please. And tell him I say that there is no need of this thing. I know I can't stop it, but I will not whine, Eliot, I will not whine. Go ahead, if you must, and let my interests suffer. But neither you nor Perkins nor the both of you are going

to make me change my mind, do you hear that, Eliot? If I were going to attend the Social Congress, you would have no anxiety about a rush meeting of stockholders. But you have it now, and Perkins and some others want to satisfy it, because I, Ed Gray, a man who has his own free conscience, chooses to put aside the Social Congress, and engage in some other work that belongs within his rights to choose."

Mr. Gray walked away, and went out to the street.

CHAPTER X

EVE OF EPIPHANY

AS THE day wore on the Gray home on Crawford Street looked forward with increasing enthusiasm to the evening at St. Moville's. Several times had the telephone called to ask if Mr. Gray were at home. Some voices sounded pleasant and others surly, and these, Mrs. Gray imagined, might be from people who felt chagrin over the morning paper. One who asked for Mr. Gray, on learning that he was not at home, requested Mrs. Gray to come to the phone.

"Well?" was her first query as she raised the receiver.

"This is Henderson, Frank Henderson. Good afternoon, Mrs. Gray. I called you because I can not find Ed either at his office or at home. I want to tell you, and please not to worry and feel annoyed, but there is to be a meeting to-night of the house, and I wish you could get Ed to attend. I do not want to offend your feelings, Mrs. Gray, but I know that you will let me say that I think this question of the play at Kevin's school this evening has irritated some of the men of the house, and under pretext of urgent business they are going to have a stockholders' meeting. This must appear very silly to you, as it certainly does to me. But, while we can not prove that this is the reason of such conduct, it looks strong that way. Perkins called on me early this morning to get my meager voice for the meeting, but I

told him that I would be with Ed on this matter. Now they are going on with the thing, and I wonder if we can get Ed to arrange satisfactorily."

Mrs. Gray could not reply immediately. The news put her into a perplexed state of mind. She knew that Mr. Henderson was her husband's faithful friend, a man of many enterprises in the city, and holding a small portion of the stock in her husband's business.

"I do not know what to suggest," she said, finding her voice at last; "I think, however, that Ed might withdraw from the engagement at St. Moville's. I know the good Fathers would not allow him to go on, if they knew of this embarrassing position. But I do not know how Ed would look at it himself. I can telephone to Mr. Russell, the director of the play, and

let him know early, so that he may provide."

"Well, I think Ed will stand for the play," said Mr. Henderson; "you know how determined he is when he believes himself right. But perhaps he would arrange to come in for part of the meeting. Anyway, Mrs. Gray, the situation is a plaguing one, and I hate to see these fellows act like this. And that nasty note in the 'Transept'! You know I am not a Catholic, but I don't sing in such a chorus as the 'Transept,' and I told them so about an hour ago, and they are going to hear more from my place as soon as I see my advertising manager."

"Can I reach you, Frank, when Ed comes home?" asked Mrs. Gray.

"Yes, certainly. I'll be here at the Marlborough. They tell me Ed was here this morning and did the honor-

able thing. You call me here, and now don't worry over this. I'll call up Eliot again, and tell him a few thoughts I have just now. Good-by for the present."

Mrs. Gray stepped into her room, and set her mind on the situation. Then she decided to leave everything to the judgment of her husband. She went to her prie-dieu, and this was her final prayer: that her husband would stand by his resolve to take part in the play—no matter what it might cost him in his business, for then would he choose, although his part in the Morality was not a religious act, what made for spiritual thought and the kingdom of Christ, in preference to mere material prosperity.

When Mr. Gray entered his home she told him that Frank Henderson was waiting at the Marlborough. He

went to the telephone and in a few moments was talking to his friend.

"That's splendid of you, Frank," he said when he had listened to the other. "I must hurry, you know, and so pardon me for being brief. But here is my final word to those fellows: I will not attend the meeting. You go proxy for me if you wish. That will give you forty-five with your own votes. Don't let them sell the Lowell mill, if you can stop them. Anyway I think they will not dare to act in the matter without us. This is just a game, a sneaking maneuver, and they will crawl out of it to their own disgust. However, if you care about attending, be proxy for me. I'll let Eliot know that you have my votes. And if you prefer to stay at home, do it. Or I say, Frank, perhaps you'd care to come with us to this play to-night. The piece goes nicely

with tableau and chorals. I have only a line or two."

He waited while Mr. Henderson was speaking. Then he continued: "I must be square with you, Frank, and say that the play has given me a few thoughts. 'Times change and we change with them,' used to be an old saying; but, do you know, I begin to feel that men remain much the same no matter how wide are the times between. I have met with parallels to this play right here in Boston."

There was another pause, and finally Mr. Gray said: "Well, Frank, if you decide to attend the play, bring Mrs. Henderson over to Crawford Street and ride out in the auto with Margaret and the children. I go ahead with Kevin."

And immediately after dinner he and his son, clad in big coats, and carrying

their bundles, stepped out to the automobile.

"The auto will come back for us soon," said little Margaret, as she turned from the window. "Hurry up, Hugh, hurry; we must be ready."

Mrs. Gray found a moment to look into her prayer-book. She turned the pages and came on the Introit of the Mass for the eve of the Epiphany. She read it fervently while the children listened: "For while all things were in quiet silence, and the night was in the midst of its course, Thy almighty word leaped down from heaven from Thy royal throne."

CHAPTER XI

MELCHIOR

IT WAS a clear, cool night as the automobile left the Gray homestead with its second load. The children were wrapped well against the cold and their little hearts beat warmly at the brilliant prospect before them. Mrs. Gray, with the Hendersons, occupied the rear seat of the big car, and chatted merrily as they rode over the streets to St. Moville's.

The pleasant duty of entertaining her guests prevented Mrs. Gray from enjoying thoughts that might otherwise have come to her. But she managed to take an occasional glance out of the window of the automobile and

rejoiced at the number of vehicles that were speeding on in the same direction, all going, as she fancied, on the one mission with her. At the street-car station below St. Moville's she looked with delight at the throngs of people who were making their way on foot toward the school. It seemed like a picture of a pilgrimage procession.

When the bell announced that the play was about to begin, the Gray party was comfortably seated in one of the theater boxes. Silence fell on the entire assembly at the warning sound, and every eye turned toward the stage. The curtain was drawn back a little toward the center, and a youth in a long flowing robe appeared.

"Kevin," whispered Hugh, glancing toward his mother.

"Hush, dear," she said, taking his hand.

It was Kevin; and of his part as speaker of the prologue, he had made no mention at home, following a suggestion of Mr. Russell, who wanted it to be a surprise to his mother. The lines that were spoken as prologue were the verses from the prophecy of Isaias which are read as a Lesson in the Mass of Epiphany. Kevin stepped forward and in sweet, ringing tones recited the verses.

"Arise, be enlightened, O Jerusalem: for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.

"For behold darkness shall cover the earth, and a mist the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.

"And the Gentiles shall walk in thy light, and kings in the brightness of thy rising.

"Lift up thy eyes round about, and

see: all these are gathered together, they are come to thee: thy sons shall come from afar, and thy daughters shall rise up at thy side.

"Then shalt thou see, and abound, and thy heart shall wonder and be enlarged, when the multitude of the sea shall be converted to thee, the strength of the Gentiles shall come to thee.

"The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Madian and Epha: all they from Saba shall come, bringing gold and frankincense: and showing forth praise to the Lord."

Then the little speaker withdrew, and one by one the scenes came upon the stage, and the slow, reverential chorals were sung. Some portions of the play, known so thoroughly by Mrs. Gray, did not have settings on the stage. Many things were to be sup-

From the Grays' box, eager eyes watched every movement of David and Melchior.—*Page 163.*

posed, and conjecture of them was easy from the dialogues and narrations. Thus in the magnificent tableau at the end of the play, though the persons of the Holy Family could not be perceived, in the deep alcove at the side, the spectators were not disappointed; for their eyes beheld the Magi and their gorgeous retinue enter to pay homage to the new-born King.

From the Grays' box, eager eyes watched every movement of David and Melchior. The latter came to the scenes only a few times, and here in the last great spectacle, as the rapturous cadences faded sweetly away from the beautiful chant of the Magi and their attendants, Melchior and Gaspar and Balthasar knelt majestically before the alcove of the Holy Family and lifted up the royal tribute of their gifts.

Hardly an eye in the audience but was suffused with tears before the impressive tableau.

Mrs. Gray, with her arm about little Hugh, listened in rapt attentiveness while Melchior made his address to the King. She drew back to hide her wet eyes from any who might be looking from the hall. Mr. Henderson caught every word and he knew that Melchior's speech was, indeed, apposite to the feelings of his friend Gray.

"We come to greet Thee, O King!" rang forth the earnest voice of Melchior; "with many turnings were our ways made long, and dangers lurked beside our journey. Darkness did prevent our steps, and the false craft of them we thought were friends. But Thy good light was made to pierce the darkness, and Thy sweet voice was strong to call us forth, even amid the

scoffings and threats of our encompassing foes.

"What gifts were best that we could find in our far lands we bring to Thee and place in Thy Queen-Mother's hands. O Lady, these we pray thee take for Him, thy Son who is our King, and speak thy Mother's words for us.

"All hail, O King, unto Thy reign! Thy kingdom come. O deign to take the homage of our hearts forevermore!"

The Wise Men arose, and three youths, one from each of the retinues, stepped down the stage and stood facing the audience. With voices that easily seemed angelic to the entranced multitude, the three boys sang forth that great call to the praise of God which the Church uses so frequently in her liturgy:

"Laudate Dominum omnes gentes: laudate eum omnes populi."

The people, as if they had rehearsed the action, arose spontaneously and sang back in one tremendous voice:

"Quoniam confirmata est super nos misericordia ejus: et veritas Domini manet in aeternum."

Again the sweet treble of the boys sounded forth on the hushed auditorium, while every head was bowed in reverence:

"Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto."

Grand was the chorus that answered, echoing back from every cranny of the hall and reaching down into every heart with powerful emotions:

"Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper: et in saecula saeculorum. Amen."

When the curtain waved this inspiring scene to a close, Mrs. Gray, with tears through which she could hardly

see, turned to attend to the wrapping of her children in their furs. She had no voice for speech. And the Hendersons felt that their own silence for a few minutes would be pleasing to her joyful heart.

The party went round to the great reception-room and looked at the players receiving the congratulations of their friends. Mr. Gray came forward with a bright smile, and stooped down to kiss his children. Mr. Henderson reached forth his hand, and greeted him heartily as "Melchior of Boston." After a few minutes, the automobile was speeding away in the direction of the hills of Brookline to the Henderson home.

CHAPTER XII

A MATINEE

A GENTLE snowfall gave a beautiful picture to the Gray children as they looked from their study window on the morning of the Epiphany. Down came the light flakes, sometimes slowly as if they were asleep, and again rushing before a breeze, as if they were playing some game, and finally falling fatigued after their sport on the frozen lawn. An old tower which stood at the gateway of the grounds appeared to the children to be a giant out of their picture books, and King Snow was trying to take him captive in the meshes of his countless white cords.

A MATINEE

Kevin had gone with his mother to attend the early Mass at the Carmelite Convent. The other children were to go with Kate to a late Mass at their church, and after that to visit the beautiful Crib for the last time that season.

"This is Little Christmas, Hugh," said the mother as she was starting for the convent; "the old folks call it Little Christmas, and we are going to enjoy it as the old folks used to."

"The snow will give us white, white coats and make us look like the Wisemen at the Crib," he answered cheerily.

But the snow was not falling when his mother returned with Kevin, and the little lad made that fact known to everybody there. Mr. Gray reached over from his chair and lifted his boy in his arms, and marched off with him to the breakfast table.

Though the father had his accus-

tomed pleasantness he did not seem talkative. Mrs. Gray fancied that his mind was occupied with considerations of the proposed meeting of the directors the night before. She was surprised, therefore, when, as they arose from table, the father turned to Kevin and said, "I think it would be proper for us to go out to St. Moville's and congratulate Mr. Russell on his splendid success. We came away in such a hurry last night that we may have appeared discourteous to the teachers." And then noticing the expression of surprise on his wife's face, he said to her, "There need be no anxiety, Margaret, about our affairs downtown. They can wait an hour or two. Perkins and Eliot will take time to look over the morning paper and discuss the news. And, by the way, the 'Transept' prints the best account of the play, I think."

An hour later, when he and Kevin arrived at the school, they went to the office and asked for Mr. Russell and Father Hughes. Several boys, who could not catch trains for their homes the night before owing to the lateness of dismissal, had remained at St. Moville's; and with them Kevin, at his father's suggestion, went off to enjoy recreation in the gymnasium.

Mr. Gray stood waiting under the dome of the main building, and began to study a marble monument which occupied the center of the rotunda. It was the majestic statuary by Tadolini, representing the Archangel Michael conquering Lucifer, set high upon a richly-carved pedestal. Mr. Gray walked about and turned at various angles to admire this magnificent work of art. It grew to possess, the more he viewed it, something greater than ar-

tistic excellence, or rather it was art at its full power, with external beauty for the eye, but a great symbolical message for the soul as well. It was the masterly molding of stainless marble into the graceful figure of the great archangel, clothed in flowing, immaculate robes, holding in his right hand aloft the invincible sword, his wings outspread, as if they fanned the air of heaven, and upon his brow the terrible indignation of offended righteousness. Beneath him lay the devil groveling in defeat, his proud head low down, his face slightly upturned, showing the scorn of hate and the muscles drawn tight in agony, and his flat, fleshy wings, hideous and powerless, and his claw-like hands clutching hopelessly at the hard, flaming earth. But to the soul's vision, the group was the representation of Truth victorious over Error, of

the erect and peaceful bearing of a spirit that had flung down the powers of sense, the strength of the flesh, and the might of wicked passions. It was the soul, free and unperturbed, aloft and joyful, over the carnality of life, over the false principles and lies and prejudices of the world.

While Mr. Gray was engaged in his study, Father Hughes and Mr. Russell appeared and saluted him very heartily. Mr. Russell took the gracious congratulations and went away to spend a half hour with the boys at play. Father Hughes led Mr. Gray along the cloister arcade to the faculty house and then up to his room, a simple chamber whose meager furnishings were a surprise to the visitor. When their colloquy was ended they went over to the gymnasium. Mr. Gray excused himself for not being able to accept an

invitation to visit the other parts of the school; his business on Congress Street awaited him, he said.

As he passed the chapel with his son, he was attracted by the sight of men from town entering the little edifice. Many of them he knew, but he did not ever even imagine that all of these acquaintances were Catholics. He turned and looked back at the chapel, and then said to Kevin, "Shall we enter for a few moments?"

As they proceeded toward the doorway, he stood for a moment and spoke again, "You remember, Kev, that I took you to the rehearsal when you needed a companion. Well, I am just thinking that it is your turn now to take me; we must begin a new drama to-day."

They entered the chapel and went down to the sanctuary where the Crib

was. While Kevin was kneeling in prayer his father sat and watched men and women come up to the railing, say a little prayer, and go away to their shops and offices.

As the two walked along by one of the terraces toward their homeward car, the father, with a quiet tone and pleasant smile, asked, "Kevin, you know the French word for morning, don't you?"

"Oh, that's easy, Father. The word is *matin.* I know a sentence with the word: *Je suis heureux ce matin:* I am happy this morning," said the boy.

"Yes, that's it, Kev. *Matin* for morning. And so I think we'll call our programme this morning a matinee."

As their car approached Boylston Street, where Kevin was to transfer for his home, Mr. Gray leaned toward him and in a low voice said, "You will tell Mother, Kev, that Father Hughes will

call at five this evening to tell her what I was talking about with him this morning. He and Mr. Russell will take dinner with us. And," he took his boy's hand and spoke very slowly, "tell her that I hope to take her to church next Easter."

Mr. Gray rode on to his office. Kevin, when his car reached Crawford Street, felt more like flying than walking. He saw his mother at a window, and Kate coming up the street with the children. As they reached the steps he waved his hand toward his mother, and Hugh's bright voice called out, "Kev, it's Little Christmas. Mother said so this morning."

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